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VOICES FROM THE CRYPT

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When we think of the history of techno, house, and thus inevitably disco or hip-hop, we always think of the (sub)proletariat, queers & PoCs, the repressed, people who are given neither space nor time, who have to appropriate it themselves; set up safer spaces, heterotopic places, temporary autonomous zones with their own laws. Usually not for everyone at the same time, but in different combinations. We think of Detroit, not because it is the 'origin' of techno, but because Detroit as a washed-up area, as a former motor city, refers both to (formerly futuristic) Fordist labor and to unemployment caused by crisis; and both of these in racialized form. Today, Detroit

is suitable – at least in Europe – as a museum exhibit, as a place of origin, as a signboard for 'good music', in short as a brand among others. In general, local color is used as a brand in electronic music, even more than in rock music before: Detroit techno, Chicago house, Berlin techno, London, etc. etc. So also 'Sound of Frankfurt'.

Whatever these local labels are supposed to mean, in most cases the description of the hegemonic and commercially successful sound of a certain area and its respective phase(s). Rarely does what made up that sound, the experiences of people transformed into sound, remain. Even more rarely do all those voices that seemingly played no role have their say. This is also the case with the 'Sound of Frankfurt':

Not without reason does the MOMEM (short for: Museum Of Modern Electronic Music, the name alone is downright ridiculous, at the same time we think of the Museum Of Modern Art) opens with a concert by Sven Väth, whose current album doesn't elicit much more than a tired smile and yawn, whose reputation is built on a combination of sayings, such as "1..2..3..Gude Laune" and arrogant, coked-up, mackery. In a way, it may also be apt, so Frankfurt/Main stands next to many interesting events, fed by the social tension and so openly by (class & identity) contradictions shaped city, just also for a feel-good sound and skillfully-indifferent ignorance. It is also a city in which the elbows out and down kicking across all classes and milieus belong to the good tone of the city, as well as the fading of these conditions in order not to suffocate in the accumulated dirt. While in Berlin the fucked up from the squatter scene of the 80's & 90's was integrated and marketed 'Berlin Chic', in Frankfurt they have long since put their money on stump is trump and the social coldness attested in the 60's is simply glossed over with shallow hollowness and declared to be the cultural figurehead of a city: "Welcome to Frankfurt", a city that outside of its own navel-gazing is probably mainly known for its airport and the ECB.

The opening of the gates to hell in April is announced in parallel with a downright uninhibited[1] German bumbling nonsense:

> *Christian Arndt is a cultural scientist, journalist and music publisher from Frankfurt. The expert in the field of techno culture in Germany has recently published the book "ELECTRONIC GERMANY". He is not alone in this. In recent years, several excellent books on German techno history have been published, for example "Klang der Familie – Berlin, Techno und die Wende" or "Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno und der Easyjetset". As the titles suggest, these works focus on the party capital Berlin. Arndt takes a different approach. In "ELECTRONIC GERMANY" he locates the beginnings of techno not in Berlin or, say, Detroit, but in Frankfurt. For a short time, the Main metropolis was the national and international "techno capital." […]<<[2]*

So this is how it reads when Germans, not only in the financial economy of Europe, but also in the cultural landscape of the world want to set the tone again. In the competition of the cities Frankfurt must have been of course once national and international Technohauptstadt, after all it is now another German city, Berlin, and earlier, yes, before, there was' anyway no history. Out comes the always been predominance of the speechless & wordless chatter of the feelgood cocktail party bubble. And in this case, unfortunately, it has very little to do with queerness,

subversion or SaferSpaces, but with networking, marketing and exploitation.

Compared to this historical revisionism at its best, the story is told a little differently when we interview current protagonists from the USA. Most of them tell a double story, yes, they became 'big' in Europe, they could suddenly earn money with what they were doing, finally they were joined by 'white capital', which in the USA in the 80s & 90s to a large extent still stayed away from their events. However, they also tell, almost without exception, the story of how they were ripped off, in their fees, the royalties, in the clubs or with the labels. And thus we are exactly at the point of what is legitimately called post-colonial, the exploitation that was once set in motion is repeated after it has been formally, and on the level of representation, abolished (Again, to all the queers who are having a short wave right now, don't forget to learn from history, because already the change in transsexual laws in Germany is collapsing). Accordingly, DeForrest Brown, Jr. then says the following about it:

> *Last year you began representing the campaign to "Make Techno*
> *Black Again." Can you speak a little bit about the roots of that idea,*
> *and its relationship to the original music you create as Speaker Music?*

"Make Techno Black Again" began as a meme made by Luz Fernandez who co-runs a sustainable gender-fluid apparel line called HECHA / 做 with my partner Ting Ding. The meme grew into a limited collection of hats produced by Luz and Ting, and as they were preparing for a reissue and redesign, I got involved as a representative and was commissioned to interpret that project as a mix. In the statement for the mix, I wanted to highlight the less formal elements of techno and explore its structure with a much-needed openness that diverges from the understanding of the European dance-music culture industry. There is no four-on-the-floor beat factored into the piece, but there is a loose stereophonic conducting, and real-time beat-matching that occurs through techniques of dubbing and resampling that I hope made the mix pulsate in a way that's reflective of the energy inside of techno. To quote my written statement: "The 'Make Techno Black Again' mix is a tribute to the extended thoughts and techniques that went into the composition of Detroit techno […] designed to be a self-reflective and non-linear tour of Detroit techno as a machine of momentum and an expansion of Black music with the aid of newly acquired technology."

The hat transfers information in a direct and discrete way – as memes and other forms of propaganda tend to. As I develop my music and conceptual work, the hat works as a kind of formative ground for signaling and hopefully collectivizing Black people who are and aren't aware of this section of our history, as well as triggering white and European people with an entry point to a new perspective. 2019 has felt like an aggressive year towards historical revision for me. It has been a joy following Nikole Hannah-Jones' 1619 Project, which has provided so much information for the American (and hopefully global) public to chew on. The disgusting and psychotic beginnings of America, and its system of oppression-fueled industrial capitalism through the selling and torturing of human bodies in the Transatlantic slave trade, needs to be examined from every angle possible as a matter of public safety and awareness. It must be known that the savagery which went into the enslavement of Africans is directly tied to every

aspect of what we call "everyday life."

The history of techno – and the most potent influence of my music practice as Speaker Music – is deeply embedded in the circumstances of the development of the American workforce and production market. The logical step after slavery was to move to assembly line labor, as it could replicate the same functions and results of slave labor within somewhat humane and governmentally regulated conditions. I've been working on a book called Assembling a Black Counter-Culture for Primary Information, which has given me room to elaborate on techno as it stems from the term "technocracy" (or "the governmental control of society and industry by elite of technical experts"). To factor labor and monopoly capitalism into the history of techno, I worked through the writings of auto worker and political activist James Boggs, particularly "The Negro and Cybernation" and The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook. His "on-the-ground" experience with the assembly-line manufacturing process worked well in conjunction with [original Detroit techno artist] Juan Atkins' reading of Alvin Toffler's book, The Third Wave, which covers America's transition from assembly line production to the data-driven information industry we know today. In the book, Toffler refers to "techno rebels," who would use technology in unconventional ways against the intention of the technocratic elite. For a talk at Unsound Festival in Krakow Poland, I spoke on this idea of techno as a means of re-interpreting our technological present, and tried to offer very sober examples of how white European notions of progress naturally filter out Black involvement while extracting as much from Blackness and Black people as possible. With Speaker Music, I want to close this production loop, and advance with a premise of Black radicalism.<<[3]

Repeated is the same story that has pervaded pop music since the beginning[4]:

Who was the King of Rock? Elvis? I could laugh; merely a white-painted and straightified knock-off of Big Mama Thornton and Little Richard.

The Beatles? Would be nothing without their (female) fans. And what might they have sounded like without the Cookies, The Marvelettes, Glady Horton, or Tina Turner?

Ward off dangers of a queer, subaltern, proletarian, Jewish, non-Christian, non-white, non-binary and redirect the marketing to a boring knock-off that may be identified with without danger. Grind off every point, let the stone sway through the waves until it is completely rounded, has lost all corners and edges.

It is not only those who market, the owners of clubs and labels, but also the individual artists themselves who play along:

The rut goes on, instead of contradicting, sabotaging or trying to build up an outside, they keep quiet, integrate and speculate on getting at least a small piece of the already rotten cake. Who eats today still a piece of the cake, tomorrow if necessary no more piece will get off, or it snatch from the next person.

With a rest approach of identity: Gudde Abbo!

In case of any stomach problems, don't forget to vomit, and next time look at what you eat beforehand. "Destroy 2000 years of Braukunst" was written in the still empty and meanwhile many years ago with the reason that there would be built a kindergarten, vacated Institute for Comparative Irrelevance at Kettenhofweg 130.

In places like this, as well as many others in Frankfurt, Techno, House, Hip-Hop, Punk, lived on, we don't need to idealize it, also there and elsewhere, always with problems of sexism, racism, class differences, or the like, and yet with a claim to another world, with a brief flash of just that:

> An emancipated society, however, would not be a unitary state, but the realization of the general in the reconciliation of differences. Politics, which would still be seriously concerned with this, should therefore not even propagate the abstract equality of people as an idea. It should instead point to the bad equality today, the identity of the film-interested with the weapon-interested, but think the better state as the one in which one can be different without fear. If one attests to the Negro that he is just like the white man, while he is not, then one does him wrong again secretly. One humiliates him amicably by a standard behind which he must necessarily fall under the pressure of the systems, and which, moreover, would be a questionable merit to satisfy. The advocates of Unitarian tolerance are always inclined to turn intolerantly against any group that does not conform: the stubborn enthusiasm for the Negroes is compatible with indignation at Jewish unmanliness. The melting pot was an institution of industrial capitalism let loose. The thought of getting into it conjures up martyrdom, not democracy.<<[5]

In good German tradition, the contradictions, suppressed from Frankfurt's history, are swept under the carpet and forgotten:
Forgotten are the violent evictions of squats for alternative scenes or of illegal raves. Forgotten is the starvation of the off-scene in favor of established artists[6], the power and financial imbalance. Forgotten that with mille plateaux & Force Inc., two big labels from the corner of Frankfurt exist(ed), explicitly dedicated to communism and conspired for the abolition of state & capital. Forgotten is the Night Dance Demo[7], which took place in Frankfurt for more than two decades and was carried by party or art collectives, as well as radical leftist groups, until it had to move out of the way and develop other strategies under the influence of state power[8] in 2008 at the latest. Forgotten is that ironically, for a long time, due to the restrictions of autonomous centers, the Café KoZ became a public place where today's 'new talents', to stay in the jargon, could try and play, because no one would accept the risk of an experiment in the everyday club life; where heterogeneous masses could meet, because the place was empty, and there was no entrance or racial profiling at the entrance. Forgotten the many drug raids. Forgotten every single blow with the club, the wandering in the pepper spray fog, the being ripped off by club operators[9], the being ignored and forgotten. Forgotten.

The mustiness doesn't disappear, however, just because you cover your eyes and warble a nice tune. The rotten cake still stinks, and it doesn't help to cover it with icing. And not only because it has already started to mold, but because the ingredients used to bake it were already beyond their expiration date. Who wants this bakery anymore? Scrapping and picking up useful leftovers

is the only thing worth doing.

That something like the MOMEM comes into being is not a sign for the vivid virality of Techno & House or as one would say in the Newspeak of 'club culture'. Instead, like the many rock museums that now exist, it is a sign that the rotting corpse is now being mummified and exhibited[10]. Like capital, which wanders from crisis to crisis, retro-phenomenon after retro-phenomenon is now consumed from the coffin, colorfully painted and driven through the fair. While its history is exorcised and edited: What is exorcised is exploitation (by the very great-grandchildren of colonial masters who today claim with beaming smiles to belong to the vanguard of a liberal world), racialization, middle passage, the necessity of queer spaces (in order not to be beaten up or lynched), exorcised is resistance and hope for a different and better life, as is the inscription of the existing false in these commodities[11]. That which you/you call culture bears the taint of oppression & violence, in the perpetuation of which the MOMEM inscribes itself. To destroy it together with its conditions of origin is the only logical conclusion.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the "Committee for the Abolition of the Arts" wrote with full contempt for Beuys and art business(-ness) in the "_art manifesto"[12]:

> _art counters Beuys's assertion that "every person [is] an artist," that "no person has to be an* artist"<<. Stefanie Sargnagel pushed in the same direction with her statement: >>I feel that complaining about the precarious life of an artist is a luxury problem in many cases. No one has to become an artist:in.<<[13]
> That means at the same time art is in many cases wage work, like each other, and just as stump (in the production process as well as their product), as well as Künstler_innen look it out in the capitalism from their art to want to live, each other humans must live also from something.
> Who starts to instrumentalize every trendy & woke topic for his own marketing: Climate, Black Lives Matter, Queers (lately Trans* & non-binaries), Ukraine, etc. Proves not so much his_her political consciousness, nor her sensitive humanity, but much more a follower's operational blindness and a coldness towards the actual misery of individual people:
>
> I believe, however, that attempts to bring political protest together with popular music, that is, with light music, are doomed to failure because the whole sphere of light music, even where it somehow dresses itself up in a modernist way, is so connected with the character of the commodity, with amusement, with the pursuit of consumption, that attempts to give it a different function remain completely external, remain completely external, and I have to say that when someone stands up and sings something about Vietnam being unbearable to what is basically schmaltzy music, then I find that this song in particular is unbearable, because by making the horrible somehow consumable, it finally also squeezes something like consumer qualities out of it. <<[14] The distinction between serious and light music may be invalid in this respect today, in times of the post-popular, the entire cultural sphere has long since become a spectacle.
> Instead of continuing to play the boring and complacent game of an art business, and art as work, it would be time for artists to finally start again, not to make everything art, but to want to

> *abolish wage labor and the exploitative relationships that go along with it as such. Your games of representation are nothing but an eyewash and a hypocritical assurance to be on the right side, while the suffering continues. The artistic one-size-fits-all of the last years corresponds to the content one-size-fits-all of politics; your pseudo-individualism is not liberation, but only the latest garb of liberal fascism[15]. Your establishment in a world of MOMEMs, Telekom Electronic Beats', Red Bull Music Academies, Boiler Rooms and whatever other horrors one can think of, is, as so often, not a success story in the sense of emancipation of all people, but one (of restructuring) of capital.*

[1]Frank Apunkt Schneider "Deutschpop halt's Maul! – For an aesthetics of uptightness"

[2]https://www.feelslikehessen.de/blog/technoliterturteil1

[3]https://afropunk.com/…/speaker-music-is-helping-make…/

[4]Cf. Sasha Geffen "Glitter Up The Dark – How Pop Music Broke The Binary"

[5]Th. W. Adorno "Minima Moralia"

[6]The asterisk or colon are intentionally omitted, one could think the generic masculine would be as appropriate here as it was 100 years ago.

[7]http://nachttanzdemo2008.blogsport.de/

[8]https://vimeo.com/2116966

[9]Here we stay with the generic masculine.

[10]With a shoutout to Lenin.

[11]"When you are powerless, something can happen to you and afterwards it has not happened. For you, it happened, but somehow they remember it differently, or don't remember it at all. You can tell them, but it slips their minds. When you are powerless, everything you do seems to be in vain. […] Your road seems dark. Your path is not clear […]" (Hari Kunzru "White Tears")

[12]https://derayling.copyriot.com/_art-manifesto

[13]https://taz.de/Schriftstellerinnen-und-ihre-Nebenjobs/!5839635/

[14]Theodor W. Adorno on political protest and popular music, 1968, 3sat

[15]Cf. Maurizio Lazzarato "Capital Hates Everyone – Fascism or Revolution."

translated by deepl.

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